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FROM FODAG

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SUBJECT: WFP'S COLLABORATION WITH UNHCR IN PROVIDING FOOD
ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN UGANDA JOINT MISSION ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY

1. Representatives from the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture (FODAG), the State Department's Office of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and U.S. Embassy Kampala conducted a joint assessment of the collaboration between the World Food Program (WFP) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the delivery of food aid to refugees in Uganda, August 22-27. Uganda is a pilot country for the implementation of the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between WFP and UNHCR that transfers some responsibilities for refugee feeding from UNHCR to WFP. The collaboration seems to be working well, although some improvements could be made regarding the determination of the number of beneficiaries and addressing the sustainability of WFP's school feeding program. End summary.

2. Representatives from FODAG, PRM and Kampala-based regional Refugee Coordinator traveled to northeastern and southwestern Uganda.

GOU MEASURES TO ACCOMMODATE REFUGEES

3. According to figures from UNHCR, there are approximately 206,000 refugees in Uganda. The majority of these refugees, approximately 175,000 or roughly 85 percent, are from Sudan. The remaining refugees are primarily from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. WFP provides food assistance to nearly 155,000 refugees in 66 settlements.

4. The GOU must be credited with welcoming the refugees, providing them with agricultural land and employing a SelfReliance Strategy (SRS) designed to integrate refugees into the Ugandan systems in the Adjumani, Moyo and Arua districts of the country's northwest, where 65 percent of the country's refugee population is located. The GOU is particularly receptive to refugees from Sudan. This can be attributed to the fact that the Sudanese once welcomed Ugandan refugees in similar fashion. Indeed, many of Ugandan President Museveni's cabinet ministers were once refugees in the Sudan themselves.

5. The GOU allocates land to each refugee for farming. The exact amount of allocated arable land is determined on the community level by district officials and is not systematic, which means that the amount of dedicated land can vary. In one settlement each refugee was allocated as much as .6 hectares of land for cultivation. This meant that a family of five could receive as much as 3 hectares of land for farming. (One hectare equates to approximately 2.5 acres.) In the newly opened Maadi Okollo settlement, each refugee family is allocated one hectare, with additional land to be allocated to larger families (details have not yet been determined).

6. The GOU, in partnership with UNHCR and WFP, also employs a self-reliance strategy (SRS). The two main goals of SRS are basic food self-sufficiency and the integration of provision of services to refugees on par with those provided to nationals by local government entities. Nationals in refugee-affected areas benefit from health centers, primary schools, school-feeding programs, roads, classrooms, water points and boreholes that were built to assist refugees. This helps foster harmony between refugees and nationals.

7. The combination of arable land and the SRS allows WFP to gradually move from relief food distribution to targeted feeding of beneficiaries as they become more self-sufficient in food production. Refugees receive 100

percent food ration for the first two years, which varies between 1791 kcal to 2169 kcal per day, per person, depending on the food basket and refugee status.

Thereafter, rations are reduced based on a number of factors, including refugee successes in food production and other income-generating activities. As a result, in UNHCR's Rhino Camp located in northwestern Uganda, refugees who arrived in 2001-2003 receive 100 percent ration, while the caseload from CY 2000 and CYs 1994-1999 receive 50 percent and 40 percent rations respectively. Such ration reductions are designed to stimulate increased food production and household self-sufficiency.

UNHCR/WFP MOU IN ACTION

18. WFP and UNHCR have been working together under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) since 1985. The MOU has been revised four times, most recently on 9 July 2002. With this revision, it was agreed that, under a pilot project, WFP would be given responsibility for final distribution of food aid in five selected operations involving refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and/or internally displaced persons (IDPs). Uganda has participated in the year-long pilot program since April 2003.

19. The collaboration between UNHCR and WFP is working well due to the Government of Uganda's (GOU) strong support for refugees, coupled with the effectiveness of WFP's and UNHCR's Implementing Partners (IPs) in delivering and monitoring food aid delivery. WFP and UNHCR representatives credit the ongoing success of the pilot project to their working relationship with highly capable Implementing Partners, such as the German Development Service (ded). However, better coordination and communication in determining the number of would-be beneficiaries within the refugee community and a clear strategy regarding the sustainability of WFP's school feeding programs would go a long way towards strengthening this pilot program.

10. For its part, the Rhino Camp IP, German Development Service (DED), was equally positive about its working relationship with WFP. DED representatives did, however, complain about slow reimbursement for handling costs on the part of WFP. They also noted that WFP does not always report impending pipeline breaks on a timely basis. As a result, the IP is left ill-prepared to adequately inform the beneficiaries of a reduction or substitution in their food basket for a particular distribution.

11. UNHCR representatives in the field also raised a few areas in which their partnership with WFP could be enhanced. In addition to sharing the IPs concern regarding WFP's timely notification of breaks in the pipeline, one UNHCR staffer suggested that WFP was understaffed for the operation. As a result, WFP's monthly distribution schedule often stretched into 5 weeks.

12. Some UNHCR personnel also felt that WFP's logistical operation could be enhanced with additional trucks for delivery the various distribution points. WFP responded that it would not be cost-effective to purchase additional trucks that would only be in operation once a month and idle for the remaining period.

13. WFP representatives raised the issue of slow registration of refugees on the part of UNHCR. This is an important issue because timely and accurate registration of refugees helps prevent duplicate distributions to the same individuals and their families during a single distribution cycle. UNHCR has planned to conduct a country-wide registration this year but it had to be delayed until next year due to the recent hurried re-location of refugees to the West Nile. This required UNHCR to shift both material and staff resources in order to avert an humanitarian crises.

DUBIOUS FUTURE FOR SCHOOL FEEDING IN UGANDA

14. WFP's school feeding program is benefiting more than 170,000 children throughout the country. The program has also proven tremendously successful. Both school attendance and test scores have improved as a result. The program is so successful that a representative from the Ministry of Education requested additional USG assistance in developing the school system's infrastructure to accommodate increasing numbers of students interested in attending school. School-age students bring their younger

siblings to school because of the availability of food and because it allows their mothers to farm and take care of household activities.

¶15. According to figures from WFP, funding support from USDA's McGovern-Dole initiative represented approximately 60 percent of WFP/Uganda's school feeding efforts in 2001/2002. Increased school feeding requirements, coupled with cuts in the McGovern-Dole initiative, have reduced this percentage to 23 percent for the period 2003/2004. This should be of great concern to WFP and its implementing partners because the McGovern-Dole program's overall funding level has been cut (despite ever increasing requirements) and it appears that it might be cut significantly in the coming years.

¶16. Given the success of WFP's school feeding program in Uganda, any reduction in McGovern-Dole would have significant adverse effects in Uganda. Travelers raised this issue with WFP and GOU representatives with an eye towards encouraging them to begin considering alternative funding mechanisms for the program. It is apparent that WFP and the GOU have not developed alternative potential sources of funding for the school feeding program in the event that McGovern-Dole funds are not available in the future.

CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENT

¶17. Overall, travelers were encouraged by the implementation of the pilot project between UNHCR and WFP. It was clear that both organizations respect each other's comparative advantage in this endeavor and are open to strengthening the collaboration. Some logistical challenges were apparent, but this is to be expected in the transition period and should not present an obstacle to further implementation of the MOU.

¶18. Travelers are concerned about WFP's, UNHCR's and the GOU's preparedness for any reduction in McGovern-Dole funding and will encourage WFP in Kampala, Rome, and Washington to strategize for such an occurrence.

¶19. Mission members have encouraged WFP Kampala to inform both UNHCR and the IPs of any potential break in the food pipeline in a timely manner.

¶20. PRM and Refcoord Kampala cleared on this message. HALL

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